

MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church & Society REPORT

#43 May-June 1982

Focus on Ordination

A Wife and Husband Reflect on Ordination

by Martha Smith Good

Martha: Gerry, I have been doing some thinking in preparation for my ordination next week. As I reflect on the past twelve years, the steps I've taken in my ministerial pilgrimage, I can only marvel at God's patience with me.

Gerald: God's patience? Are you saying God had to wait on you a long time?

Martha: Yes. It has taken me a long time to come to the place where I now feel comfortable and right about being ordained. Your ordination took place sixteen years ago. I'd like to hear you talk about it. How did you choose the Christian pastoral ministry as your vocation?

Gerald: As a young boy I experienced a deep personal "call" which led me back to school. The call to ministry seemed to be God's direction for me. I recall how easy it would have been to go in another direction when lack of finances became an issue. It was the sense of "call" which kept me on target. God provided the needed resources also. As I declared my direction I began to receive affirmation and encouragement from others. Later when I received an invitation from a congregation, I knew God wanted me in the ministry.

Martha: Did you ever wonder whether you would be refused ordination by the Mennonite Church?

Gerald: No. When I entered the ministry the assumption was that ordination would follow. I never even considered not being ordained. It was the only way to become a pastor.

Martha: Gerry, what would you have done if you had been a woman when you received your call to the ministry?

Gerald: If I had been a woman it would not have been feasible to even *think* about ministry, let alone *act* on the call. I would have had to either repress that nudge or channel the call into a more acceptable direction.

Martha: As you reflect on the event of your ordination, Gerry, can you recall what was significant for you?

Gerald: I was in! I then had "full standing" as a pastor. I not only had the qualifications; I now had the papers

to confirm my position. I recall there was a certain seriousness about it, but it did not feel like a heavy yoke.

Martha: How has your understanding of ordination changed during these past sixteen years?

Gerald: I see less of a sacredness about ordination. I made vows of faithfulness to God, and they are still very meaningful to me. I realize that as I have grown in my understanding of faithfulness to God I have then appropriately deepened my commitment to those vows. You know, Martha, it would probably be enlightening for me to review those vows. Perhaps all active ordained ministers would do well to make a "covenant renewal" occasionally. Personal maturity brings change and new understandings. Vows maybe should be kept current.

Martha: The procedure used at the time you were ordained, I understand, was not much different from the one used now. I'm curious, though. Did conference personnel ever ask how you would manage being a husband, father, and minister, or was it assumed that you could handle all three roles without any problem?

Gerald: The question was never asked. It was assumed that I could handle all three. I know how upset you became when you were asked that question....I appreciate your questions, Martha. The ordination event is a special one. How have you come to this point?

Martha: The difference in our stories is that my journey has been a long, difficult struggle. It makes a difference whether you are man or woman. I began to experience nudges toward the ministry twelve years ago. I said No repeatedly and with strong persistence because I am a woman. This role seemed forbidden territory to me and I was not prepared to face the difficulties I knew I would encounter. Trail blazing is always hard work. In spite of my fears and resistance, I did go to seminary. I often wondered what kept me from running in the opposite direction—my fear and anxiety were at such high levels.

Gerald: Why did you go to seminary?

Martha: I was on a search. I was not sure God existed and I needed to find out. You see, if God did exist

The MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society (formed in 1973) believes that Christ Jesus teaches equality of all persons. It strives to promote this belief through sharing information, concerns, and ideas relating to problems and issues which affect the status of women in church and society.

then I would need to respond to the nudging I was feeling. And if God *did not* exist....

Gerald: Then what?

Martha: I wasn't sure what I would do.

Gerald: That must have been a lonely struggle; I marvel that you didn't give up.

Martha: I often came pretty close to it. But there were persons who were counting on me, and that instilled hope. They encouraged me; they affirmed me. One person even blessed me in my search and said it was okay to wonder about God. It freed me to encounter the God who was alive and wanting to be part of my life.

Gerald: So gradually you consented to the nudge.

Martha: Yes, gradually. I took it slowly and cautiously. My various experiences seemed to be a plus. Persons began to call forth my gifts. I became excited about my own growth and the possibilities of giving myself and my gifts in ministry to the church.

Gerald: Why have you not been ordained before? You have been in the ministry eight years already.

Martha: I wanted to make sure. I have been challenged about this by some of my Mennonite sisters, and my response has been "I will seek ordination only when it feels right for me." I am now sure that ministry is God's place for me and I desire to seal that commitment with ordination. I also seek the affirmation of and recognition by the wider Mennonite fellowship. Many persons in the Mennonite context have helped to shape me, have listened to me, and have encouraged me. I want them to now continue to be a part of my life by giving me their blessing.

Gerald: Is what you just said your understanding of ordination?

Martha: Yes, in part. Like you, I do not see it as a super-divine office obtainable by only a few. Ordination is, I believe, the natural direction to move in a pastoral role. I understand ordination to be a recognition and affirmation of a call from God. It is celebrated in the context of the believing church and is to be open to all persons regardless of race or sex.

Gerald: Now *that* is a very radical statement and certainly would be questioned by many.

Martha: True. God's kingdom as taught by Christ was radical as well. It was, as you know, open to all persons, that includes anyone who responds to Christ in faithfulness and obedience. Further, anyone responding as a disciple of Christ may also experience a nudge toward the pastoral ministry.

Gerald: But what about your role as wife, pastor's wife, and mother. You are, after all, a woman and there are certain roles that only you can fill.

Martha: Gerry, if I had not detected that twinkle in your eye I might think you were serious. As you know that concern was expressed when my request for ordination was being processed. And you were equally as distressed about that as I was.

Gerald: I suppose that one of the biggest questions of many people is the role of the spouse of a ministering person.

Martha: Yes, it is. Gerry, how did your first wife (now deceased) feel about your ordination? Were her future goals considered?

Gerald: Her goals were really not considered. The question was more whether she was willing to be a support to me. Could she set me free to follow God's call? We did talk about other options for me while I was in school, but the question was always "How can Gerald be faithful to the call?"

Martha: How was she involved in your ordination service?

Gerald: She sat and stood alongside of me. She made a verbal response about being a supportive, faithful wife. Her support was important; it meant a sacrifice for her. If she had resisted that support, it would have had serious consequences for me. I see that my role has now been somewhat reversed. I am now called upon to be the supportive spouse. How do you want me to participate at your ordination?

Martha: I would really like you to make a statement of some kind, if you could both affirm me and my gifts and offer to be supportive. I would also value your participation in the laying on of hands. After all, how many of your minister friends have had the opportunity to be part of the ordination of their wives?

Gerald: Very few, if any.

Martha: You are one of the few Mennonite men who is privileged to have an ordained minister as a wife. What are the implications or advantages of that for you?

Gerald: It is a unique experience. As far as I'm concerned, ordination will not change you. What we are into is very new yet. There are few models of husband/wife ministers demonstrating that it can be done. I'm excited about sharing the same vocation, and we have both talked about and even anticipated a team ministry if that should become our choice. You ask about implications. Sometimes it feels like my options are limited in terms of involvement in the broader Mennonite context.

Martha: Why is that? Because of the demands that my vocation places on you in terms of sharing household/family responsibilities?

Gerald: No. I think it is because of the feelings some persons have about you being in the ministry. There must be something wrong with me to feel okay and be able to affirm your involvement in the church.

Martha: Gerry, what are your perceptions about changes which are occurring in the Mennonite Church regarding ordination.

Gerald: We are in the process of allowing ordination to be what it was intended to be. Ordination is being dethroned. It is no longer such a high and lofty experience. Some local conferences I know of are re-working their statements on ordination. A lot of thought is being given to this issue and I feel confident about the direction in which we are moving.

Martha: What is your prediction about ordination of women in the Mennonite Church?

Gerald: I think the future is bright. While there were dissenting voices at General Assembly (Bowling Green '81), there was also a lot of support for ordaining women. The church is much poorer for not having maximized the ministering gifts of women. As I look back, I recognize there have been many women who would have been excellent ministers and who should

have been recognized as such. They, however, unfortunately were known as "the strong woman behind the successful man." That old saying has been a put-down on both men and women. The attitude has been that only one spouse in a marriage could be in the ministry. Why? Because the minister needed someone to support him.

Martha: Gerry, we have been chatting about something that concerns us both. I value your honesty. I look forward to sharing with you the same status of ordination to the ministry. I'm reminded of the notice on a

seminary bulletin board: "How old is God?" The following day an answer appeared: "She's not a day over thirty." I hope that with time more and more persons, when asked questions about their pastors, will respond joyfully with, "Our pastor, she..."

Martha Smith Good, member of the MCC Women's Task Force, is the compiler of feature material for this Report. She was ordained to the pastoral ministry in May 1982.

Leadership and Ordination Intertwined

Dorothy Yoder Nyce

Two years ago I wrote papers on leadership and ordination for a seminary course titled "The Church." This article focuses main themes from those studies.

As we women move into more diverse leadership tasks in the church, we carry responsibility to examine past experience and to envision new dimensions. Not all leadership styles that we inherit are useful. But what alternatives will we create? What energy investment will be required in nurturing authentic change? How will we replace the hierarchical model with more communal approaches?

I invite us to be in conversation on issues such as the following:

I. New Testament Observations

1. Jesus relinquished Divine privilege/position to live among us to reinforce the fact that God is with each of us. Our temptation to turn to and rely on mere human authority figures often replaces divine authority alone.
2. Jesus and early church believers "blessed" individuals through laying on of hands, but in no way were these contexts restricted to leadership or distinct office. The rite/expression was often linked to baptism.
3. Water baptism—experienced by, but evidently not practiced by, Jesus—was included in the Great Commission to signify Spirit presence, to commission members to the tasks of ministry.
4. To be a disciple/follower calls for *each believer* to continue Jesus' mission in obedience, not resort to institutionalism where a few do most of the tasks.
5. Paul established no formal designation of leadership. He spoke frequently and appreciatively of co-workers, women and men.
6. Later pastoral epistles specified types of leadership (such as bishop). These patterned Jewish practice, not Jesus' example.
7. No biblical justification exists for excluding women from leadership or rites.
8. There is no supportive evidence for ordination as now practiced.

II. A Glimpse into Church History

1. Early church baptism commissioned members to responsible mission/discipling
2. Pastoral offices displaced the priesthood of all.
3. By 100-150 AD/CE sacramental orders were introduced. Apostolic succession and a tradition of teaching became prominent by the end of the second century.
4. Into the third century a more communal focus shifted into a priest's acting *upon* rather than *with*. By the late third and fourth centuries a priestly, sacramental concept of ministry (a caste for ministry) was prominent, reviving Old Testament Hebrew priest ideas. This most clearly excluded women.
5. Following medieval attempts at renewal, often through religious orders, Reformation efforts gave at least lip service to a return to the priesthood of all.
6. In early Anabaptism, (according to W. Schaufele), leadership did not replace or substitute for accountable membership. At baptism a person was "charged with the obligation henceforth to sin no more and to bring as many as possible to the right way." Each member was potentially a preacher and a missionary....An astonishing thing about Anabaptism is not so much the activity of the ordained leaders, who usually were chosen out of the laity...but the missionary commitment of the ordinary members.
7. But remnants of the former system persisted and reemerged: three-fold ministry, prominent men, and power in office were reinstituted. Is not the task of leadership to critique rather than encourage these three? How does ordination usually impact them?

III. Factors to reexamine (A beginning list, in no order of priority)

1. **Baptism:** Through baptism members receive God's authority (Spirit). As a result, they find purpose in being active disciples. This could be understood as a form of authorization/ordination. Baptism is the starting point for ministry. Inherent in the rite is the priesthood of all.
2. **Authority** is in membership. Members then invest a portion of their authority in leaders, for a particular period of time. Such extended authority

becomes authentic only when reinvested in members. Authority is distorted when not exchanged, when only given or received by an individual.

3. Accountable membership: being personally responsible/reliable/committed. Doing neither less than or more than one "share" of the discipling/following. To be a member of Christ anticipates active ministering. Members tasks include: extending God's care, patterning Jesus' example and teaching, offering God's call to belief. Probably nothing detracts from committed membership more than does one-at-the-top leadership.

4. Servant style: "Growing the gifts of others." Determining to work toward wholeness for each member, not just a few. Directing people away from the self and human figures to realizing more fully the reign of God. Negating both irresponsibility from making contributions and prerogative for exclusive opportunity. Servant style and headship are incompatible.

5. Leadership: The process, or the *how*, of accomplishing tasks from vision to completion or readiness for re-vision. Organizing so that members account for their gifts. Re-investing others who then replace you. The creative leader reads broadly, listens with attention, dreams, clarifies and summarizes, responds to feelings, perceives breadth as well as detail, draws from other's strengths, appreciates differences of opinion and conviction, recognizes biases with which s/he operates, values personal choice and decision-making for all affected by those, keeps agenda moving, responds organizationally and intuitively.

6. Women in leadership: Women were active as disciples and leaders in the early church. Cultural factors have established and perpetuated separation and distinction between women and men. The foundational task will be not to incorporate women into distorted leadership patterns, but to create new styles emphasizing cooperation rather than competition.

7. Ordination: As long as men are ordained for leadership, women should not be excluded from the rite. The Mennonite Church 1981 Leadership and Authority document suggests: 1) Ordination

as such is not a biblical term but because of tradition and broad usage, it can be endorsed if adequately understood. 2) Not limited to office-bearing, a variety of related terms were used for New Testament people charged with particular ministries. 3) To comparably acknowledge and validate everyone involved in any/all continuing, discernible church ministries is most biblical in principle. With 2 and 3 I agree, but does 1 risk being misunderstood? Does it foster inexcusable differences and irresponsible membership or mislocate authority? How can these be avoided; how find creative alternatives?

8. Priesthood of all. Authentic "priesthood of all believers" has happened only briefly in history, has been experienced by very few. It is too demanding of everyone. Few desire religious commitment to that extent, of that sort. We choose not to make of baptism the call to ministry. We choose rather to support cultural and social norms, norms such as :

—Because you are male (like Jesus), you may preach/bless the sacraments.

—Because you provide "order" that makes us feel comfortable, you will be ordained.

—Because you are female and competent, you threaten others needing protection.

—Because you have experience and information, you are to be trusted with more. Or because you are less informed/experienced, therefore less threatening to insecure people, you will be chosen.

—Because you do not want responsibility, you may "be excused."

We encounter serious dimensions in assuming leadership or ordination. Are we willing to bring to them new vision, conviction, and accountability?

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The Long Way Coming Home

by Mary Mae Schwartzendruber

My pilgrimage toward pastoral leadership in the Mennonite church has combined the Yes and the No of my life in exciting ways. I early gave whole-hearted assent to the faith of my parents, and thus, to the Mennonite tradition as understood then in the rural Ontario context. I learned to stand strong as I moved into several secondary school settings where Mennonite Christians were scarce. It was not here that I struggled, however, with faith questions, for "separation" was so thoroughly entrenched in my being that the bridges

and relationships which often evoke tensions and paradoxes were only weakly formed.

It was rather in the context of a conservative Mennonite setting that my strong desire to learn, grow, and teach cultivated in me the ability to think for myself. No longer could I accept what others thought, per se, or wanted me to think. I had to know—and the Scriptures became a source-book of assurance, of puzzlement, and of the unknown.

Leaving home to train for elementary teaching and to pursue the teaching profession was the occasion of more learnings: new trust in "outsiders" who also followed Jesus; new skills in lesson preparation, planning, and communication; a beginning recognition of

the fact that others wanted me to lead in various activities. How did all this fit into the "meekness" that Paul seemed to require as God-ordained for women? Gradually, my expectations of others began to change, allowing them to differ from me in faith perceptions, even admitting to the possible absence of such.

Teaching consumed my energies, but I had time and motivation to enter whole-heartedly once again into the mainstream of Ontario Mennonite life, especially in youth and adult Sunday school teaching. I had said good-bye to the excessive cultural demands of the conservative church to re-integrate in the conference churches. During this time, my wish to learn and grow persisted as I studied part-time at the university. After one year of full-time studies, I graduated...to what next? A wide open future loomed ahead of me.

These years had been years of "advocacy" for me: a woman lay leader and a minister took keen personal interest in my developing personhood and abilities. From this time on, ministers and church workers were my friends, my counselors, my colleagues in conversation, and my teachers. Other important events had happened. Term papers in religion and culture opened biblical studies to me in fascinating ways. The "advocate" minister suggested to me the possibility of going to seminary ("Seminary? What's that?") Teaching adults in Sunday school gave me opportunity to lead group discussion and discovery with some one other than children. More of my interests were being challenged. I began to understand that the years to come probably wouldn't have the same shape that the past four had taken.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) came along just when I was ready, and before realizing the total significance of the move, I had signed up in the Teachers Abroad Program (TAP). The surprise of being considered a "missionary" by friends and acquaintances was soon my professional thing. The No to the glorified image or the special "sent-ness" was powerful. The Yes to my facility in languages, in teaching, and my interest in cross-cultural relationships was more powerful. I decided that Zaire was to become my teacher and my wilderness experience for several years.

As I approached the time to leave for Zaire, I had begun to think, "If others could conceive of me as a missionary, why not as a minister?" My farewell message in my home church reinforced this possibility. And before I knew it, the idea had taken root. I wanted to be a minister. A Mennonite minister. I wanted to share a ministry in a congregation. It was as clear and simple as that.

Almost.

I recall that the first person with whom I openly discussed this was a peer in TAP, as we flew together across the Atlantic, headed for Iceland. The wilderness experience confirmed and strengthened a sense of certainty about this direction. One of the country directors of MCC Zaire who had just graduated from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries explained the form of training offered there and encouraged me to explore the option on my return. The isolation of teaching overseas allowed me to consider ministry as a

goal without fear of what others would think. I even forgot some of the strong mores of our culture, so that I could freely reflect on why I was considering this avenue to continue serving God.

And so, arriving back home, I was as unprepared (foolishly) for the shocked, tensed-up reaction of my family as they were for my announcement: "I am applying immediately to the seminary so I can move toward pastoral leadership." This decision became very firm as I watched a male peer and friend, younger than myself, being asked to serve in various leadership capacities where I couldn't have been considered. I needed a certificate that would say, "You can consider me too!"

While I had un-learned some of our social values (thank goodness), I had developed a deeper sense of urgency in some positive awarenesses. I was accepting and nurturing my gifts in leadership, my wish to relate and to work across age and cultural barriers, and my ability to administer and facilitate. My first years at home again gave me opportunity to practice these, and to add public communication to the list. Directing the Christian Education program in my home congregation, co-ordinating another congregation's volunteer program for senior citizens, and preaching on several occasions allowed me to taste and see that the direction I had chosen was good! This call was affirmed and confirmed by many close friends, and generally, by my home congregation. Even part of my family recovered from the shock, and became very supportive.

My two years at the seminary (I still don't have that certificate!) were a time of forming my own mold, and not just conforming to any old mold. While I rather insisted on doing things in my way, I benefited greatly from relationships and studies, in that order. One of my main hopes was to learn enabling and facilitating, which in itself was a refusal to accept the glorified image of the pastor, the concept of "more-than-usual-sent-ness." I also learned to think more clearly. I learned to hear myself, as well.

It is now one and a half years since I have been part of the pastoral team at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church. Here I struggle both to accept my equality and to enact it, even if I'm not always "equal". Having now made a longer-term commitment to this congregation, I have said Yes to this shape of ministry. Congregational leadership calls forth and challenges a joyous variety of my gifts.

As I face ordination, I am at peace. I am at home. I have come a long way. God alone will reveal the path ahead.

quote

We have a long way to go until we give women the freedom to serve in our congregations that the New Testament allowed. – Marlin Miller

Resources

Alvin Beachy, "Do the Scriptures Support or Oppose the Ordination of Women: An Inquiry Based upon a Christological Interpretation of the Bible," 1979. Available from the Western District Conference Office, Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117. Enclose \$1.50.

Jessie Penn-Lewis, **The Magna Charta of Women** (Bethany, 1975, 103 pages, paperback \$2.50). Summary and condensation of Katharine Bushnell's classic work on biblical feminism, originally published in 1919.

Elizabeth Tetlow, **Women and Ministry in the New Testament**, 1980. Historical background and biblical account. Available from **Daughters of Sarah**, 2716 Cortland, Chicago, IL 60647. 164 pages, paperback \$6.95.

Judith Wiedman, ed., **Women Ministers**. Twelve original accounts of and by women who are ordained ministers. 1981, 182 pages, paperback \$6.95. Available from **Daughters of Sarah**, see address above.

quote

While there are many individuals and some congregations who will long continue to have reservations about the ordination of women, there are few, if any, who follow strictly the admonition that women should keep silent in church. If we were to enforce this admonition strictly, most churches would lose three-fourths of their church school teachers and one-half of their choir members overnight. The fact that we make no effort to enforce this admonition, and apparently have no uneasy conscience about not doing so, may simply mean that we have gone further toward overcoming some of the restrictions which some New Testament writers placed upon women leadership roles in the church than we are really aware. May God hasten the day when we'll feel equally at ease about ordaining any qualified woman to the ministry.—Alvin Beachy in "Do the Scriptures Support or Oppose the Ordination of Women: An Inquiry Based Upon a Christological Interpretation of the Bible," 1979.

Book Reviews

The Ordination of Women by Paul K. Jewett (Eerdmans, 1980, 160 pages), reviewed by Gay Kauffman who is interested in women's concerns, particularly from the perspective of the church. She is a minister's spouse.

With this book, Jewett has tried, in a thorough and organized way, to lay waste to the arguments against the ordination of women. He challenges the traditional view that the office of the ministry belongs exclusively to men, and argues, somewhat unconvincingly, that women have the right to be included in that office.

He begins the book by stating his position on the relationship of men and women in general—that men and women are partners in life, especially in the Christian church, and thus, share the privileges and responsibilities of life, particularly life in the church. He refers the reader for his defense of this position to his book **Man As Male and Female**. This position provides the backdrop for the entire book, thus one might do well to read that book first.

He moves on to review and critique the traditional reasons for excluding women from the ministry, beginning with the argument from the nature of women, proceeding to the argument from the nature of the ministerial office, and concluding with the argument from the nature of God. The latter is a lengthy chapter, divided into sections on the imagery of God in the Bible, the meaning of the male incarnation, and, the male apostolate, and the historical role of women in the church. He concludes this chapter with a section discussing the Vatican decree "Inter Insigniores."

Having made his case for the ordination of women, he goes on to suggest changes that must take place in order for women to enter the ministry, particularly in the area of graduate theological education.

In his epilogue, he discusses the implications of masculine language in both the hymnal and the Bible, and suggests some changes that might reasonably be made.

Somehow, in spite of his thoroughness, his arguments do not seem to prove his point conclusively. Perhaps this is partly due to his obvious bias in favor of the ordination of women. Even in his sections stating the various arguments, he seems to have trouble remaining objective. One might even question, at some points, whether he takes those arguments seriously.

There can be little doubt, however, that he takes the Scriptures seriously. His theology is both solid and conservative.

His frequent use of latin terms to express his ideas makes it difficult, at times, for the reader who has little knowledge of that language. However, most of the book is easily read and understood by the lay person.

One might wish that he would have discussed the Protestant view of the ministerial office in greater detail rather than focusing almost exclusively on the Catholic view. Perhaps his case would have seemed more convincing from that view.

Nevertheless, this book provides the reader with much food for thought. It is interesting and sheds some new light on an area which, up to now, has been rather neglected. It might well be a beginning for an ongoing discussion of women in ministry.

When God Calls a Woman by Elisabeth Schmidt (Pilgrim Press, 1981, paperback \$7.95—\$11.50 in Canada) is reviewed by Elaine Sommers Rich, writer, Bluffton, Ohio.

In this 240-page autobiography, Elisabeth Schmidt shares the inspiring story of how she served God, becoming the first ordained woman pastor in the

French Reformed Church. Daughter of divorced parents, she speaks of the "godless universe" of her childhood. At age 15 she was converted through attending a Protestant Sunday school. While a student at the Sorbonne, she felt called into theological study at Geneva.

Next came years of pastoral ministry without ordination, first in a remote mountain parish, then in a prisoner of war camp at Gurs, and next at Sete in the south. Pages in this book glow with shining sentences of faith and spiritual insight. Mlle. Schmidt faced opposition, but at last, in 1949, at the strong request of others, and after much ecclesiastical wrangling, she was ordained.

From 1958 to 1962 she ministered to the French community in Algiers, remaining at the time of independence (July 1962) when most Frenchmen left. There she also worked with Muslim girls and became acquainted with Arab Christians of Kabyle origin. Her last pastorate in Nancy extended from 1962-72. (Translator Allen Hackett's notes about things French are very helpful.)

Now retired, she says after 37 years in the ministry: "The life of the people of God is a march full of dangers and unforeseen hazards. ... Thus it is all together that we look toward the future, with a listening ear for 'what the Spirit says to the churches'" —Elaine Sommers Rich in *Provident Bookfinder*, May 1982

News and Verbs

Margaret Allen, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and **Nancy Shetler**, Smithville, Ohio, were part of a four-member delegation of Mennonites who met with key United States congressional members and staff on April 19 and 20 to discuss the effects of budget priorities on the poor. Margaret directs Philadelphia's Bethany Day Care Center; Nancy is on the staff of Grady Memorial Hospital, which serves lower-income minorities in Atlanta, Georgia.

Seenab Hashi of Suriya, Somalia, is chairperson of the Hoyoyinka, a women's leadership group in Suriya Refugee Camp. The eighty-five women who make up the group, representing each of the camp's sixteen sections, look after the most needy people in the camp, coordinate activities of special interest to women, and serve as a liaison with the camp commander for women's issues.

Honora E. Becker, retired professor of English at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, died 27 April 1982 at the age of 82. She received the Bethel College Distinguished Alumna Award in 1970 and an honorary doctorate from Bethel College in 1972.

Marguerite Borgois, eighteenth century nun, will be canonized in Rome on 31 October 1982, the third Canadian to be so honored.

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart celebrated its first Women's History Week from March 1-5. "Women's Experience Is Good News—Let's Celebrate" was the theme of the week and we did celebrate. The goal of the steering committee was to bring women's experience into the daily life of the seminary. Most of the classes had women as guest lecturers during the week. The halls came alive with women's expression of their experience through art: quilts, needle point, batik, paintings, photographs, embroideries. **Dorothy Friesen** spoke on "Women's experience in the Philippines." **Anna Bowman** presented a forum entitled "Historical Perspectives on our Mennonite Experience as Women and Men." **Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza** preached on "The Anointing Woman and Judith." The week climaxed on Friday evening with an international carry-in meal and a program of vocal and instrumental music, stories, poetry and humor. Over sixty women contributed their energy, talent, time and inspiration to make the week a unique gift to the seminary community.—*Mary Schertz*

Frieda Schellenberg, Watrous, Saskatchewan, who supervised Mennonite Central Committee's rural health program from 1974 to 1980, is now coordinating follow-up services and in-service education of Bolivian health promoters whom MCC nurses have trained to provide basic village health services. Frieda is a graduate of the School of Tropical Medicine, Liverpool, England.

The fifth plenary conference of the Evangelical Women's Caucus will convene 21-24 July 1982 at Seattle Center, Seattle, Washington. Topic: "Women and the Promise of Restoration," taken from Luke 1:45 ("How happy is she who has had faith that the Lord's promise would be fulfilled"). Speakers include **Patricia Gundry**, author of *Woman Be Free, Heirs Together, The Complete Woman*; **Roberta Hestenes**, assistant professor and director of Christian formation and discipleship at Fuller Theological Seminary; **Cathy Meeks**, co-ordinator of Afro-American Studies at Mercer College and author of *I Want Somebody to Know My Name*. Leaders of the (54) workshops include: **Virginia Ramey Mollenkott**, **Nancy Hardesty**, **Kathleen Storrie**, **Tom Sine**, and **Reta Finger**. For more information, write EWC, 1982 Conference Registration, P.O. Box 31613, Seattle, WA 98103.

Mennonite women from Denver, Colorado, and the surrounding area met 22 March 1982 and have the following coordinators for various concerns: **Carolyn Esch**, **Christine Hamilton-Pennel**, **Grace Hershberger**, **Rhoda Imhoff**, **Eva Klink**, **Diane L. MacDonald**, and **Mim Roth**.

Mary Ann and Robert L. Schreiner of Bethel Mennonite Church, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, have accepted a call to serve as pastoral couple of Hyattsville Mennonite Church in the Washington, D.C., area. They served

Bethel Church since 1973, and began at Hyattsville in February 1982. The Hyattsville Church has had a unique ministry through the International Guest House and the Jubilee Association which operates a Christian home for mentally retarded adults.

Bertha Wilson, 58, took the oath of office 30 March 1982 and became the first woman to sit on the Supreme Court of Canada.

Ruth I. Buxman, **Judith A. Hooley**, and **Rene Money-penny** are the three women in the 1982 graduating class of Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California.

Louise Buhler, Warman, Saskatchewan, Mennonite Central Committee Southeast Asia representative, was part of a four-member delegation to Vietnam for two weeks in April to explore options for MCC's work in Vietnam in 1983.

Linda Schmidt, Walton, Kansas, MCC volunteer who directs Bread for the World in New Orleans, Louisiana, helped organize a three-mile "Walk for the Hungry" which took place 3 April 1982. Instead of the expected hundred or so people, there were 350 enthusiastic walkers.

Sandra K. Drescher, 1979 graduate of Eastern Mennonite College, Harrisonburg, Virginia, has authored (and Zondervan has published) a devotional book for young people, *Dear Jesus... Love, Sandy*. She is also the author of *Just Between God and Me* and co-author of *When You Think You're in Love*.

Hispanic Mennonite women convened 15-18 April 1982 for the sixth year in a row. **Marta Cardona de Escobar**, who has a radio program in Mexico called "Heart to Heart," was the speaker. The theme was "Women Subjected to the Holy Spirit."

No action was taken at the March sessions of the Ohio Conference (MC) on a statement regarding women in ministry. Presented for possible action, the proposal would have allowed congregations within the conference to choose and certify women for pastoral leadership if they discerned that as the Lord's leading. The conference instructed the executive committee to take necessary steps so that the matter can be decided in 1983.

Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, pastor of Bancroft Mennonite Church, Toledo, Ohio, delivered a sermon at the session of the Ohio Conference (Mennonite Church) held at West Liberty in March. Her subject was the need for more praise to God.

Grace Hostetler, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, spoke on the book of Colossians at the April women's retreat of the Southeast Mennonite Convention, Brooksville,

Florida. She also spoke at the March meeting of the Women's Missionary and Service Commission held in Mount Joy, Pennsylvania, using the theme "Discipleship with Joy."

Miriam Book of Ronks, Pennsylvania, is president-elect of the Women's Missionary and Service Commission, succeeding **Anna Ruth Jacobs**. **Miriam Charles** of Lancaster is the new secretary, succeeding **Lois Witmer**, also of Lancaster.

Thelma Miller Groff spoke on "Living a Centered Life—In Touch with Yourself and God" at the fourteenth women's retreat of the Pacific Coast Conference held in April.

Winifred S. Waltner addressed the Ohio Women's Missionary and Service Commission on the subject "Christian Resurrection in China." Other subjects were "Leadership Focuses on Prayer" and "Does Your Menu Include Grasshopper Pie?"

Luetta Reimer, alumni director at Fresno Pacific College, received the first "President's Distinguished Service Award," based on commitment to Christ and the church, loyalty to the college, and noteworthy spirit of voluntary service.

Myron Schrag, pastor of Faith Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, recently gave a series of sermons: "Jesus' Attitude Toward Women," "From Eve's Point of View," and "Exodus Women."

quote

The actions and words of Jesus intrude with alien hope into segregated first-century Jewish society. He freely and naturally engages women in forbidden conversation in public (John 4:7ff). His closest friends include Mary and Martha and Mary Magdalene, and everywhere his ministry extends his healing and teaching to females (Matt. 9:20-22; Mark 6:30-44, 7:24-30, 1:29-31, Luke 13:10-17). Sometimes it is women who are the subject of his parables (Luke 15:8ff) or sayings (Matt. 24:41), or who become the models of faith for his disciples (Mark 14:3-9; 12:41-44). We are told that a number of women accompanied Jesus and his disciples as he went through cities and villages preaching (Luke 8:1-3), providing for the preaching mission out of their own means. According to three of the Gospels, it is women who are the first witnesses and evangelists of the resurrection (Matt. 28:8; Luke 24:9ff; John 20:18). —Elizabeth Achtemeier, in *The Committed Marriage*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1976)

Letter

Dear Muriel: Thanks for your inquiry....I'm serving as part-time pastor of Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship which is jointly affiliated with both the Central District of the General Conference Mennonite Church and with the Ohio Conference of the Mennonite Church. I had previously accepted the responsibility of P.E.A.C.E. coordinator (Peace Education As Campus Evangelism) and needed another part-time job which could support me and leave my work time flexible. I asked to meet with every member of the Cincinnati Fellowship during the three days I spent here prior to preaching a trial sermon. With a real sense of God at work among us, we all felt eager about the call for me to work here. I accepted with no hesitation and we have had now three months of fruitful work together. The people here are a caring, very capable group. (The Ohio conference is calling me a facilitator-coordinator.) For me, I don't need the imprimatur of ordination.) It is enough joy to be working with such satisfaction sharing of myself with the people of God called Mennonite. But the fellowship wants licensing and ordination for me—at least that's what they're saying now....It is still with some pleased astonishment that I feel so comfortable in this role. Of course, both my parents were ordained ministers and I married a minister when I was seventeen and we went to seminary together (spouses could go free as long as they didn't take courses for credit) and then served United Methodist churches for eighteen years. I did have some hesitation when after two weeks here I was asked to go to the pastor-and-spouse retreat! But I went, and everyone, both spouses and pastors, were warmly welcoming. By the time I went to the Pastors' Leadership Conference I felt so much like a minister that I got up and spoke....The strange thing is that God and I have been through a lot together and I felt led by that sustaining, confronting relationship to spend my working years in church service. Somehow I thought of program things such as the P.E.A.C.E. work which would involve travel (thus freeing those with family obligations) and wasn't seeking the pastorate. When this Cincinnati assignment was suggested to me, I thought that even if no call came from it, the consideration would be good for church and search committee. So, not particularly seeking it, here I am! Serving as pastor with great joy and satisfaction. I can't know what direction there is in this for others. I went to Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries when Marilyn Miller was there for a week as Pastor in Residence. There are many women there actively preparing for ministry. Young, able, gifted persons who wonder if there is a place for them. Perhaps it is encouraging to know that I'm here. If they are willing to take part-time pay (the work can be full-time!) and the inner city small groups, there may be room in the church now and a great need....I'm being asked, "What are you doing now?" When I answer, "Part-time pastor," one reaction I get is "Uhh, who is the other pastor?" And I say, "I'm it! They've just got me!" —Nancy Kerr Williams, Cincinnati, Ohio (December 1981).

Announcement

Sixth Women in Ministry Conference

The sixth Women in Ministry Conference will be held October 15-17, 1982 at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ontario.

The Women in Ministry conferences have been held over the past years as a means of support to those women involved in ministry within the Mennonite family of churches, and as a forum for discussion about the issues which relate to that involvement. Conferences have been held at various locations in the U.S., the latest being in March 1981 at Newton, Kansas. This will be the first Conference held in Canada.

A local planning committee, with MC, GCMC, MB and BIC representation, is in the process of planning the program and arranging the details of hosting the Conference. Further inquiries should be directed to Ed Kauffman, 74 Erb's Rd. E, St. Agatha, Ontario N0B 2L0.

Inside this Report

"A Wife and Husband Reflect on Ordination," by Martha Smith Good.

Leadership and Ordination Intertwined," by Dorothy Yoder Nyce.

"The Long Way Coming Home," by Mary Mae Schwartzendruber.

Looking Ahead

Forthcoming Reports will focus on:

Human Sexuality, July-August, Bertha Beachy, coordinator;

Peace and the Power of the Housewife, September-October 1982, Edith Krause and Muriel Thiessen Stackley, coordinators;

Two-career Marriages, November-December 1982, Rosie Epp, coordinator;

Nurturing Children, January-February 1983, Karen Neufeld, coordinator;

Women Mystics and Devotional Life, March-April 1983, Esther Wiens, coordinator.

The *Report* is a bi-monthly publication of the MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society. Correspondence should be sent to Editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 4830 Woodland, Lincoln, NE 68516.

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